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War Food Administration
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Case History
of a
Nutrition Committee Activity

SAFE MILK - A PROBLEM IN COMMUNITY EDUCATION

THE COMMUNITY

In the Pacific Northwest, County X has been settled by people of Scandinavian stock. Here, in a fertile little valley, Finns, Norwegians, and Swedes are busy earning their livelihood in ways that were familiar to their parents when they lived in Northern Europe. Sixty per cent of X County's acreage is devoted to farming. Wheat is the most important crop. Hay and forage make a contribution. Over 2,000,000 gallons of milk, valued at more than \$150,000 is yielded annually by herds of dairy cattle. The county is rated as one of the principal producers of livestock and wool in the State.

The chief industries are logging and sawmilling. Wages at the sawmill, located in Y-town, the county seat, are \$150 or higher a month.

There are many churches -- Baptist, Methodist, Mormon, and Catholic. All are very active.

The Grange is very strong in this section of the country. There is also a Wool Grower's Association. The Y-Town P. T. A., and Women's Club are very active in the civic and cultural affairs of the community.

THE PROBLEM

The Primary Improvement Club, composed of mothers of children in the primary grades, is deeply interested in any and all factors which might in any way affect their children. For their February 1944 meeting, they invited the Assistant Extension Service Agent to talk on 4-H Club work. During the meeting the milk supply for the school lunch program came up for discussion. The mothers were greatly disturbed about the milk situation, because a number of cases of undulant fever had been reported in the community. At that time, the one physician in the town was treating 25 cases.

None of the dairies in the county pasteurized their milk or tested their cows for Bang's disease or for bovine tuberculosis.

The Club members asked how they could plan a program which would stimulate action on the part of the dairies. They wanted all cows tested for the two diseases and all milk pasteurized.

WHAT WAS DONE

Since there was no veterinarian in the county, the first step was to find a qualified person who would come and test the herds. To stimulate this action, members of the Primary Improvement Club who owned dairy herds signed a petition guaranteeing a veterinarian a certain number of cows for testing before he arrived. The Agricultural Extension Agent made arrangements for a veterinarian to come into the county. The Primary Improvement Club members also asked other clubs to cooperate by securing the names of any of their members owning dairy herds who would have their cows tested. They also placed announcements in the local papers so that nonclub members might be reached.

On June 22, following the February meeting, a veterinarian from a neighboring county came. The County Agricultural Extension Agent worked with him and together they visited 63 farms and tested 383 cows, including those of the two dairies which supplied the community with milk. Of the 383 cows tested, 20 were found to be infected. One of the local dairies which supplied milk to over half the community had six cows in their herd react to the tests. After eliminating these cows from the herd, this dairy made arrangements to have their milk pasteurized, and on August 1 pasteurized milk was put on the market for the first time in that community. The cows from the herd of the only other dairy in the town had no reactions to either of the tests. That dairy is still selling raw milk.

THE NUTRITION COMMITTEE HELPS

Through the Primary Improvement Club and members of other clubs, who cooperated in the milk-improvement campaign, the project reached a wide and varied cross-section of the community. It would seem that the resulting newspaper and word-of-mouth publicity, coupled with the wide participation of so many dairy herd owners, would have made the entire community very conscious of the danger of using raw milk. That, however, has not been the case. Many restaurants and families are still serving raw milk. When one restaurant owner was asked why, he replied, "Pasteurized milk is the poor grade of milk, not fit to drink. They simply pasteurized the milk to make people think it's safe and pure." These people are honest in their convictions that pasteurized milk is "poor milk." They are not yet aware of the dangers inherent in using raw milk even though 25 persons in Y-town were being treated for undulant fever at one time.

Recognizing all factors in the problem, the community health leaders felt that coordinating their efforts through the Nutrition Committee would give them the greatest force in the community.

Represented on the Nutrition Committee are members of the Primary Improvement Club; Parent Teachers Association; County Health Department; Vocational Home Economics Education Teachers; Extension Service; Wool Grower's Association; Grange; Women's Clubs, and Church Groups, including Baptist, Mormon, Methodist, and Catholic.

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The Nutrition Committee accepted the responsibility and planned an intensive educational campaign. The Committee felt that this campaign would re-emphasize the importance of milk pasteurization and thereby create a more insistent demand on the part of the community for pasteurized milk.

The local health department agreed to secure from the State Health Department various visual aids and enough copies of a circular on clean milk to distribute to every agency.

The County Nurse planned to see what could be done through the health classes in the school to educate children and parents on the need for pasteurized milk. Vocational home economics teachers were to lend their support.

The County Agent and Home Demonstration Agent planned to discuss undulant fever at every farm meeting and to urge farmers to make arrangements through the Extension offices for checking their herds.

All organizations represented on the committee agreed to arrange for one open meeting of their group and to invite a qualified speaker to present the subject of clean milk. They also planned to approach other organizations, such as the Men's Service Clubs, fraternal organizations, trade groups, and civic clubs asking their cooperation.

RESULTS TO DATE

It is too early, of course, to evaluate the outcome of the program. The leaders, however, are pleased with the response and results that they have stimulated. Farmers are continuing to have their herds checked. A sufficient number signed up for the veterinarian's assistance to require him to make four return trips to the county. The Nutrition Committee feels that if they continue to coordinate their efforts they will, before too long, stamp out the source of undulant fever in their county.

